

PATENTS GAGGED FOR NATIONAL SECURITY

Secrecy orders can be slapped on private inventions in 13 of the 26 member countries of NATO, as well as in Australia and New Zealand. And the trend, from US figures at least, appears to be upwards. In the USA, 4,885 secrecy orders are now in place compared with 4,741 in 2001.

In the UK, of the 30,000 patent applications sent to the UK Patent Office (UKPO) in Cardiff every year, 600 to 1,500 are pulled aside for closer scrutiny by military experts. "We don't reveal how many of those we prohibit from dissemination," says Patent Office information officer Jeremy Philpott. However, on the orders of the Ministry of Defence, the UKPO declassifies about 100 patents each year—typically a decade or two after they were filed.

The US Invention Secrecy Act of 1951 says that whenever the "publication or disclosure of the invention by the granting of a patent would be detrimental to the national security, the Commissioner of Patents shall order that the invention be kept secret". The UK Patents Act of 2004 runs along similar lines.

In both cases, penalties for infringement include two years' imprisonment and/or heavy fines.

(Source: New Scientist, 9 July 2005)



AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION "BOUGHT OFF"?

After the American Diabetes Association received a large gift from a major manufacturer of sugar-sweetened beverages, its top medical official is claiming that sugar has nothing to do with diabetes.

In an interview published on 16 May in *Corporate Crime Reporter*, Richard Kahn, the chief scientific and medical officer with the American Diabetes Association, said: "What is the evidence that sugar itself has anything to do with diabetes? There is no evidence."

On 21 April, the ADA announced a

"three-year, multimillion-dollar alliance" with Cadbury Schweppes Americas Beverages, which produces sweetened soft drinks that are implicated in the epidemic of obesity and diabetes in the United States. Its parent company, Cadbury Schweppes, is the third-largest soft-drink manufacturer in the world, after Coca-Cola and PepsiCo.

"Saying that sugar has nothing to do with diabetes is like saying that tobacco has nothing to do with emphysema," said Gary Ruskin, executive director of Commercial Alert.

"The American Diabetes Association has been so corrupted that they have sunk to the mentality of tobacco scientists who denied the link between tobacco and lung cancer."

(Source: *Corporate Crime Reporter* press release, 16 May 2005, <http://www.corporate-crimereporter.com/diabetes051605.htm>)

SHOCK WAVES STIMULATE BONE GROWTH

Blasting bones with shock waves sounds like a bad idea, but it turns out that it stimulates bone growth. The non-invasive technique might help treat fractures that refuse to heal and perhaps even reduce the need for hip replacements by encouraging ageing joints to regenerate.

Shock waves—single, high-pressure pulses—have long been used to break up kidney stones. They travel through soft tissue without causing damage but release their energy when they hit a hard substance such as bone.

Doctors noticed decades ago that people who had multiple treatments for kidney stones grew extra bone on the pelvis, even though later studies showed the waves do not damage these bones.

Now Joerg Hausdorf's team at Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich, Germany, has studied the effect of shock waves on bone cells.

The pulses stimulate production of an important bone growth factor, bFGH, Hausdorf told a meeting of the US and Canadian acoustical societies in Vancouver this week.

He thinks shock waves activate the same growth mechanisms as stretching and pressure.

(Source: New Scientist, 21 May 2005)



FIRST PICTURES FROM THE SURFACE OF THE MOON TITAN

... GLOBAL NEWS ...

TIME TRAVELLERS COULD NEVER ALTER THE PAST

The laws of physics seem to permit time travel and, with it, paradoxical situations such as the possibility that people could go back in time to prevent their own birth. But it turns out that such paradoxes may be ruled out by the weirdness inherent in the laws of quantum physics.

Some solutions to the equations of Einstein's general theory of relativity lead to situations in which space-time curves back on itself, theoretically allowing travellers to loop back in time and meet younger versions of themselves.

Because such time travel sets up paradoxes, many researchers suspect that some physical constraints must make time travel impossible.

Now, physicists Daniel Greenberger of the City University of New York and Karl Svozil of the Vienna University of Technology in Austria have shown that the most basic features of quantum theory may ensure that time travellers could never alter the past, even if they were able to go back in time.

Quantum theory allows time travel because nothing prevents the waves from going back in time. When Greenberger and Svozil analysed what happens when these component waves flow into the past, they found that the paradoxes implied by Einstein's equations never arise. Waves that travel back in time interfere destructively, thus preventing anything from happening differently from that which has already taken place.

"If you travel into the past, quantum mechanically, you would only see those alternatives consistent with the world you left behind you," says Greenberger.

(Source: New Scientist, 18 June 2005)

UK MINISTERS TOLD OF NEED FOR IRAQ WAR "EXCUSE"

UK ministers were warned in July 2002 that Britain was committed to taking part in an American-led invasion of Iraq and they had no choice but to find a way of making it legal.

The so-called Downing Street memo (often shortened to "the DSM" on websites) is a leaked Cabinet Office briefing paper, which states that Prime Minister Tony Blair had already agreed to back military action to get rid of Saddam Hussein at a summit at the Texas ranch of US President George W. Bush three months earlier.

The briefing paper, for participants at a meeting of Blair's inner circle on 23 July 2002, said that since regime change was illegal it was "necessary to create the conditions" which would make it legal.

This was required because, even if ministers decided Britain should not take part in an invasion, the American military would be using British bases. This would automatically make Britain complicit in any illegal US action.

"US plans assume, as a minimum, the use of British bases in Cyprus and Diego Garcia," the briefing paper warned. This meant that issues of legality "would arise virtually whatever option ministers choose with regard to UK participation".

Those present at the meeting included: Tony Blair; Geoff Hoon, then defence secretary; Jack Straw, the foreign secretary; and Sir Richard Dearlove, then chief of MI6. The full minutes of the meeting were published in May in the *Sunday Times*.

The document said the only way the allies could justify military action was to place Saddam Hussein in a position where he ignored or rejected a United Nations ultimatum ordering him to cooperate with the weapons inspectors. But it warned this would be difficult.

"It is just possible that an ultimatum could be cast in terms which Saddam would reject," the document says. But if he accepted it and did not attack the allies, they would be "most unlikely" to obtain the legal justification they needed.

The attack on Iraq finally began in

March 2003.

The briefing paper is certain to add to the pressure, particularly on the American president, because of the damaging revelation that Bush and Blair agreed on regime change in April 2002 and then looked for a way to justify it.

(Source: The Sunday Times, UK, 12 June 2005, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2087-1650822,00.html>)

AUSTRALIA'S "DUST AGE"

Australia is in the grip of a "dust age", a five-year-long spell in which the winds have swept tens of megatonnes of topsoil from the face of the continent.

"Dust is a measure of the care we are taking of Australia, just as the sediment in a river reveals how you are looking after its catchment," says Professor Grant McTainsh, who heads the dust research team in the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (CRC).

"Up till 2001, we thought we were getting better at it, based on the previous 40 years' data. Then a major dust era erupted, from 2002 to 2004, which still persists in New South Wales and parts of northern South Australia and western Queensland."

A single giant dust storm took 4.85 million tonnes of soil, Prof. McTainsh and colleague Dr John Leys calculated. In the same year, 20 other events took over a million tonnes apiece. Accentuating the continent's violent contrasts, they recently observed a huge dust plume rising right alongside a flooding creek.



"This week I finish off a magazine campaign positioning Nuclear Power as the new green energy. Next week I start work on some TV spots raising awareness of Whaling as an oceanic decongestant."

The DustWatch network was established in 2002 in NSW by Dr Leys from the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources and Professor McTainsh from Griffith University in Queensland.

Since 2002, the team has charted 15 events which exceeded safe health limits for breathability. And all of the events speak of lost topsoil, lost nutrients, and the land being stripped away and sometimes gone for good.

In bad events, the plumes extend far across the ocean, stretching halfway to South America and Africa, besides dyeing the New Zealand snows pink. In such events, Prof. McTainsh says, cubic kilometres of Australia's soil is lost—far more than is exported by our rivers as sediment. (Source: CSIRO media release, 6 July 2005, <http://www.desertknowledge.com.au/crc>)

CODEX COMMISSION ADOPTS TOUGH VITAMIN GUIDELINES

In its 28th session in Rome on 4 July, the planet's supreme food regulator has given a nod to industry in approving guidelines for food supplements over the strenuous opposition of consumer representatives.

The full Commission of Codex Alimentarius adopted in final form the Codex Guidelines for Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements. This is the Step 8 adoption, the final stage of adoption for the international Codex guidelines. The Codex Vitamin and Mineral Food Supplements guidelines are now official and no longer in draft form.

The Commission, with over 85 of the

171 Codex countries in attendance, adopted the guidelines by consensus method.

Although the guidelines are not in themselves restricting supplement sales, they do prohibit making information available about diseases and nutrition, and they call for future dosage restrictions to be set after scientific evaluation of the safety of nutrients contained in pills and capsules.

Consumer representatives who attended the meeting are concerned that the guidelines, in conjunction with the European Union's Directive on Food Supplements, may be a first step towards heavy controls on nutrition that would favour the pharmaceutical approach to disease over active, consumer-driven prevention.

(Sources: Press releases, 4 July 2005, http://www.newmediaexplorer.org/sepp/2005/07/04/codex_alimentarius_adopts_vitamin_guidelines.htm; <http://ahha.org/millierpressrelease705.htm>)

THE AGENDA BEHIND DEBT RELIEF FOR POOR NATIONS

The statement that was released on 10 June, following the G7 finance ministers' meeting, has been generally received by the Western media as heralding some kind of new dawn for poor countries.

Taking a closer look, however, reveals the statement to be very much about the breaking down of barriers to "free" trade and corporate control of countries' services and resources—or "the elimination of impediments to private investment, both domestic and foreign", as the ministerial statement put it.

The writing off of debt, which occupied so many front pages, is itself hedged around with similar conditions and requests before countries will be allowed to benefit. It is linked to the HIPC (highly indebted poor countries) initiative, a form of debt relief that has been tied to privatisation schemes controlled by the IMF and World Bank.

The G7 statement makes it clear that only those countries that are "on track with their programmes of repayment obligations and adjusting their gross assistance flows by the amount forgiven" will be covered by the write-off—in other words, only those countries that have adjusted their economies in favour of repayment.

What is more, any further grants of aid are conditional on those countries' movement towards "good governance, accountability and transparency". The World Bank, under Iraq war architect Paul Wolfowitz, will decide what amounts to "good governance".

This kind of sleight of hand—to control through the appearance of altruism—is only possible under a modern democracy, with a media so well trained in self-censorship that it can be trusted not to poke around in the more unpleasant corners of such statements.

Constant references were made to the "G8 debt deal" and even the "G8 finance ministers". In truth, there were only seven ministers at that meeting.

Russia, although allowed into aspects of the G8 summit in view of its large reserves of oil, gas and nuclear weapons, is not considered to be an important enough player, economically speaking, to come to G7 finance meetings.

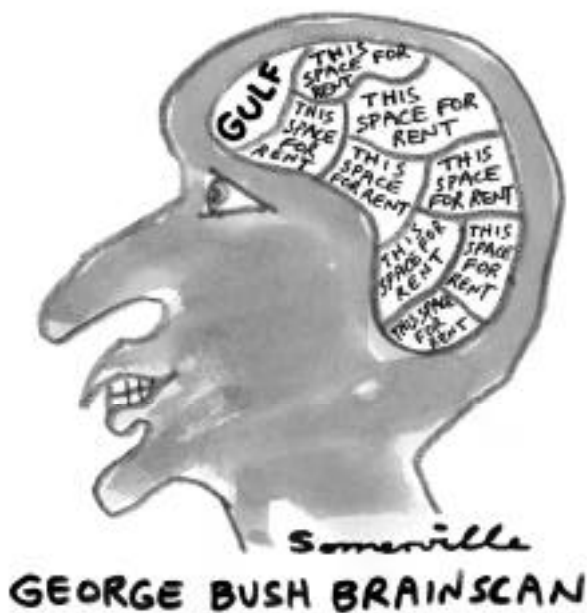
The dressing up of World Trade Organization measures under the cloak of humanitarianism and international aid is perhaps the most successful aspect of the G8 summit's spin offensive.

(Source: Corporate Watch, 17 June 2005, available at <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/?lid=1807>; read the G7 statement at http://www.g8.utoronto.ca/finance/fm050611_dev.htm)

US DRIVER'S LICENCES TO BECOME NATIONAL ID CARDS

The "Real ID" bill that President Bush signed into law on 11 May will turn state-issued US driver's licences into national ID cards.

Real ID, which was slipped into an emergency appropriations bill, stipulates that by



2008 all driver's licences or equivalent ID must include a machine-readable name, a digitised photograph, address, social security number, a digitised birth certificate and signature. It was passed in the Senate on 10 May without a word of debate.

If you don't have an ID card you won't be allowed onto planes, trains or buses or into government buildings.

The Department of Homeland Security is to decide what reading technology will be used. One possibility is RFID tags that can be read from a few metres away without your ever realising.

(Source: New Scientist, 21 May 2005)

NORTH ATLANTIC FOOD CHAIN DRAMATICALLY ALTERED

Researchers who looked at data over a 40-year period have found that the food chain in the North Atlantic has been significantly altered with the disappearance of large species, such as cod, a finding never seen before.

Ken Frank, a scientist who co-authored a recent report in *Science* magazine, said the findings provide an unsettling picture of the marine environment on the Eastern Scotian Shelf.

He said the virtual disappearance of cod and other large species, such as haddock, flounder and hake, led to what he calls a cascade effect. That is, large predators declined dramatically, but the fish they preyed on were allowed to thrive and eventually underwent a population explosion.

Cod, which used to sit on the top of the food chain, has now been replaced by smaller fish. That also trickled down to the lowest members of the marine food chain—zooplankton and algae—which are being depleted at a faster rate because more and more fish are feeding on them. That has also raised the fear that the smaller fish species could diminish the nutrients they rely on.

"Their levels have now decreased because they're being eaten heavily by the exploding group," said Ken Frank, who works for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in Nova Scotia, Canada.

"It was always known that when you deplete a predator, its prey will increase. But it was never suspected that this would cascade or extend all the way down to the base of the food chain."

(Source: The Globe and Mail, Toronto, Canada, 9 June 2005)

US MILITARY SPENDING TO EXCEED REST OF WORLD COMBINED!

It is expected that next year the United States will spend more on its defence and security than the rest of the world combined will spend on theirs. In 2004, massive US spending on the war on terrorism pushed global military expenditure above US\$1 trillion—the sixth successive year in which the total has risen, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

World military expenditure rose 5% to US\$1.04 trillion, still 6% below a Cold War peak in 1987–88 but up sharply since 1998, the Swedish Government-funded institute said in its latest yearbook.

US military spending accounted for nearly half the global figure for 2004, rising 12% last year to \$455 billion, the institute said. That was more than the combined total of the 32 next most powerful nations, SIPRI said. The figure was set to rise still further to \$502 billion in 2010.

The top five countries by military spending—the United States, Britain, France, Japan and China—spent nearly two-thirds of the world total last year according to the institute, which monitors officially reported military spending for 159 countries.

Meanwhile, in May, a US Senate committee approved the US\$441.6 billion defence bill for fiscal year 2006. This includes the Department of Defense budget and funding for nuclear weapons activity of the Department of Energy. It does *not* include other items such as money for the Afghanistan and Iraq wars (\$49.1 billion for fiscal year 2006) or Homeland Security funding (\$41.1 billion for fiscal year 2006).

Top military spenders for 2004

	\$US billions
1. United States	455.3
2. United Kingdom	47.4
3. France	46.2
4. Japan	42.4
5. China	35.4
6. Germany	33.9
7. Italy	27.8
8. Russia	19.4
9. Saudi Arabia	19.3
10. South Korea	15.5
11. India	15.1
12. Israel	10.7
13. Canada	10.6
14. Turkey	10.1
15. Australia	10.1

To put military spending in another perspective, it is worth having a look at a recent year (1998) of global expenditure priorities:

Global Expenditure	\$US billions
Basic education for everyone in the world	6
Cosmetics in the United States	8
Water and sanitation for everyone in the world	9
United Nations and all its agencies	10
Ice cream in Europe	11
Reproductive health for all women in the world	12
Perfumes in Europe and the United States	12
Basic health and nutrition for everyone in the world	13
Pet foods in Europe and the United States	17
Business entertainment in Japan	35
Cigarettes in Europe	50
Alcoholic drinks in Europe	105
Narcotic drugs in the world	400
Military spending in the world	780

It would seem ironic that the world spends more on things to destroy each other (military) and to destroy ourselves (drugs, alcohol and cigarettes) than on anything else.

(Sources: <http://www.dawn.com/2005/06/08/int14.htm>; <http://www.armscontrolcenter.org/archives/001658.php>; http://www.janes.com/defence/news/jdi/jdi050504_1_n.shtml; <http://www.wjla.com/headlines/0505/228369.html>; <http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/ArmsTrade/Spending.asp>)